

Bean not seeking reelection to Board of Selectmen

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HAMPTON -- Phil Bean will not run for a third straight selectmen term this year, leaving Jim Waddell the only incumbent in what is so far a four-way race for two seats on the board.

Bean said his time on the Board of Selectmen has been rewarding but time-consuming and that he intends to spend more time with his family and running his business. Also a state representative, he said he still intends to run in the next Statehouse election, though he said he is not sure which office he will seek. Asked if he would consider a run for Senate, he said he has yet to decide.

“It was an extraordinary privilege to be part of the leadership of the town of Hampton and to serve the citizens of Hampton,” said Bean.

Waddell, former selectman Mary-Louise Woolsey, former Planning Board chairman Brendan McNamara and Bryan Provencal, who owns the Pier Clam Shack & Bar and is on the Zoning Board of Adjustments, all filed to run for two open selectmen seats as of Thursday. The filing period opened Jan. 24 and closes Friday.

Provencal and McNamara are seeking their first terms as selectmen. Woolsey will be seeking her fifth term as selectman.

Waddell, a former Republican state rep. and who is currently selectmen chairman, is seeking his third term on the board.

Waddell said he chose to run again because he believes there are still initiatives he wants to see completed, like upgrading the town’s wastewater treatment plant. Public works officials said the plant will require \$41 million in improvements over the course of several years, the last plant-wide update to the plant taking place in 1974.

He also said he would like to see other parts of the town’s infrastructure improved, as well the completion of a salary study to examine how Hampton’s employees are paid compared to those in other towns.

“I just think there’s a lot that needs to be done. I think I have a reasonable voice on the board,” said Waddell.

Provencal and McNamara said they hope to carry the torch they believe Bean has effectively held in addressing contaminants in local water. Bean is among several Seacoast officials that have called for federal and state environmental agencies to do more in addressing perfluorochemicals in the Coakley landfill in North Hampton and Greenland and in Hampton's public drinking water.

Provencal said Bean has been "pioneering" his board's work on calling for more attention to Hampton's drinking water, in which perfluorochemicals have been detected at levels below the Environmental Protection Agency's health advisory level. Selectmen have said they are concerned the levels could be more dangerous than environmental officials currently believe.

"I feel that someone needs to make sure this is followed up on," said Provencal. "I think a lot of the town's people don't realize how much (water quality) could impact us in the future."

McNamara called Hampton's drinking water "a major issue that we need to keep an eye on." He said he is unsure whether selectmen are accurate in their belief the Coakley landfill is the source of the PFCs in Hampton's water, disputed by state and EPA officials. However, he said the board is right in pushing for work on addressing Coakley to be expedited in case selectmen are right.

All three candidates running against Waddell said they support the town filing suit against the state over shared costs and responsibilities at the beach. Disputes over costs and responsibilities have been raised by past boards of selectmen. The suit will be filed Feb. 14, selectmen said Monday.

Waddell was the only selectmen to vote against filing the suit when the board voted 4-1 to authorize legal action, and he said Monday he preferred the board to try negotiating with state officials rather than going ahead with the suit.

McNamara said he supported the suit since selectmen began talking about it, while Provencal applauded the board for its decision to forego mediation with state officials ahead of filing the suit.

Woolsey said she absolutely supported filing the suit, saying how the town's emergency services are strapped responding to the beach and that the state needs to help take some costs off the backs of Hampton taxpayers.

"The Fire Department is understaffed by about eight positions, and we cannot afford the personnel to run the ambulance at each station. We can't keep doing this," said Woolsey.

Woolsey was first elected to the Board of Selectmen in 1978 and last held office as the appointed chair of the Budget Committee in 2016. She said she is running because she believes the town is "bleeding money" and hopes to help identify new revenue streams.

"The town needs representation," said Woolsey. "I think I have a little bit of experience that might help."